

Lesson Seven: The Difference Between Prophets and Scholars of Genius

The Steadfastness of the Prophets in Conveying their Message

Who can deny the distinctive sincerity of the Prophets, the profound faith that is anchored in the depths of their beings, and the creative exertions they make in order to convey their teachings and message? Who can belittle their uncompromising struggle against corruption and oppression? If we deny the sincerity and pure intention of the Prophets, the progress made by their teachings and the ability of their message to conquer the hearts and spirits of nations cannot be possibly be explained.

One, the unique decisiveness shown by the Prophets in propagating their message and defending their message, their sense of urgent necessity, points to that message being something quite different from the scientific theories put forth by scholars.

Whenever scientific personalities wish to put forward their views, they cannot disregard the possibility of those views being invalidated, however firmly they may be based on the most advanced scientific knowledge. Since immobility is unacceptable on the path to the future advancement of knowledge, they do not block the path to additional and scientifically more acceptable research. Continuous and unceasing effort may result in the supplementing or modification of their views.

This was not the method of the Prophets. They believed profoundly in what they said, and in carrying out and advancing the mission contained in revelation, they unhesitatingly refused to retreat even a single step. They pursued their call strenuously and with steadfastness, and went forward even at the risk of their lives with their campaigns to bring about change and convey to human beings those Divine principles of culture that inspire the human being to ascend.

Two, to rely on devious methods, to have recourse to trickery deceit and lies, creates anxiety; to act contrary to the truth arouses disquiet and unease. History does not provide a single example of a bearer of Divine revelation who manifested the least sign of anxiety.

This striking characteristic of the Prophets permits us to grasp the profound reason why they conveyed their message, and gave to mankind the glad tidings of salvation through following their teachings, clearly, directly, with the utmost confidence, and without any preliminary.

The task of the Prophets was utterly removed from any kind of trickery or deceit; their teachings were profoundly rooted in the realities of being and linked to the true source of all knowledge and awareness.

Three, furthermore, scholars frequently fall prey to error in their views. A given researcher can often be seen to express contradictory views on the same subject in the course of his career and it is impossible to find a single scholar who has not made a single mistake in the course of his life.

Einstein says: "Not many scholars can be found today who regard themselves as qualified to put forward something as a definitive truth. On the contrary, figures such as Newton admit that what appears today to them today to be clear may be regarded by future generations as confused and obscure. Our descendants may look at our works of our predecessors." ¹

By contrast, the scheme of creation is not subject to error in the guidance it dispenses to the human being on obtaining his material needs. Similarly, in guiding the human being to his ultimate goal, it provides him with unerring revelation that derives from the same source as the laws of creation and points together with them to the same goal.

There is no instance in the history of prophethood of a Prophet taking back what he had previously said, after once enunciating the Divine message, or of his admitting an error and negating his previous program in order to substitute new teachings. By contrast, the ideas of thinkers are frequently seen to change as the horizons of scientific thought expand. The abrogation of a certain revealed ordinance does not contradict what we have said concerning the Prophets. First, a temporary ordinance is revealed in order to assure a certain limited benefit, and later it loses its validity with the issuance of a second, more comprehensive ordinance.

Four, the successes attained by scientists and scholars in discovering certain truths come gradually and pre-suppose the completion of courses of study and experimentation. Much time passes between the first stage of his work, when he begins his efforts to uncover something, and its final stages.

But when we look at the lives of the Prophets, we see that they had no need of any preliminaries in order to uncover the truth, nor were they subject to any hesitation. Instead, the truths they received came to them in all their dimensions directly from the source of being, without their passing through various stages of learning and investigation, and they proclaimed those truths immediately.

Five, if we look at the fundamental emphases in the teachings of the Prophets, at the great variety and comprehensiveness that is to be seen in every aspect of them, in a precise and analytical fashion, not in a purely abstract, superficial and limited framework, we will come to appreciate more profoundly how those teachings constitute a complete school of thought, liberating the human being in every sense of

the word.

Again, if we examine the firm foundations and principles on which religions are based, we will realize that none of their principal elements correspond to the views and utterances of the scholars that lived in those times. Considering the unfavorable conditions of the environment, the intellectual decay of the societies in which the Prophets were raised, it is impossible that the fruitful and elevated principles contained in every Divine message should have derived from the thoughts of a man.

Never in human history, in the course of the overall development of human society, have thinkers and men of learning been seen to produce such texts that overflow with spirituality and awareness, that in their comprehensiveness relate to all the concerns and stages of individual and social life, and that have had such a profound and observable effect. The teachings of the Prophets have had special characteristics, representing the richest and most vital source of culture in the ages when they made their appearance.

Six, choosing to accept the path of the Prophets is not simply an abstract or creedal matter that remains exclusively in the sphere of belief. Through accepting that path, human beings are, in reality, choosing a method of life, a special mode of existence, that leaves its imprint on their outer conduct. The Divine worldview is not merely an intellectual infrastructure for it also has distinctive superstructures that in their aggregate give shape to human behavior and the fabric of society.

It is possible to attribute such abundant sources of life, such comprehensive teachings that lead to the growth and improvement of the human being, to any source other than Divine revelation? For the teachings of the Prophets all exude the scent of authentic Divine message.

The investigations of researchers make it plain that the efforts of scientists and scholars take place in isolation from each other. Each travels his own path in seeking solutions to scientific problems, and they are unconcerned with the efforts of others as they pursue their researches. If their theories occasionally become interconnected in the course of their investigations, this is because of the interrelatedness of scientific questions with each other, without this being intended by the researchers in question.

Matters are quite different in the case of the Prophets. Not only do they consider the books received by their predecessors to be valid, they also confirm their missions and praise their efforts and strivings. This proves that all heavenly religions have but one source of inspiration, with each serving to supplement and perfect its predecessor.

If we look carefully at the preaching of the Prophets, we see that each of them was required to confirm those who had preceded him, and it may also have been necessary that each should proclaim the mission of the next Prophet to follow him. The abrogation of a religion does not mean its invalidation; it consists rather in the proclamation of a new and more complete message. God-given knowledge cannot be invalidated; it is simply that the following Prophet states it more fully and more precisely. The same applies to changes in divine ordinances.

Addressing the Prophet of Islam, the Glorious Qur'an says:

"In truth We have sent the Qur'an to you, confirming all the previous heavenly books that were revealed before you and bearing witness to them." (5:48)

"When God took the covenant of the Prophets, saying, 'I give you a book and wisdom,' then there came to guide you, O People of the Book, a messenger from God who bore witness to the truth of your book and your law so that you might believe in him and aid him. God said, 'Do you accept My messenger and that which I have sent in his heavenly book, the Qur'an?' They all said, 'We accept.' God said, 'Be witnesses over yourselves and your peoples, and I too will be a witness with you over them.'" (3:81)

The Bible similarly relates these words from Jesus, upon whom be peace: "Do not think that I have come to invalidate the Torah or the scrolls of the Prophets. I have come not to invalidate, but to fulfill." 2

The truths enunciated in these quotations are an eloquent proof of the unity linking together the missions of all of the Prophets. Their teachings took wing in the direction of infinity, having no source other than the all-penetrating will of God, the revelation of the Creator. Since the clear and conscious faith of the Prophets was profoundly linked to the origin of all being, decisiveness, self-reliance and steadfastness came to be their special characteristics.

1. Jahan va Einstein, page 130

2. Gospel of Saint Matthew, 5:17.

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